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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Wednesday, June 10, 1931.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Choosing Playthings." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Backyard Playgrounds." Order from the Children's Bureau U. S. Dept. of Labor. "Lamb As You Like It." Order from the U. S. D. A.

Uncle Ebenezer had something on his mind. I could tell by the quizzical look he turned my way. And nobody can look more quizzical than Uncle Ebenezer when he is in the mood.

"If this keeps up, Aunt Sammy," he said, "no telling but what you'll be broadcasting weekly chats to the family man instead of his wife."

Uncle Ebenezer will have his little joke now and then. This time he was referring to the fact that I had had two requests for information in one morning and both from men. I consider it a triumph in any woman's life to have a man ask her for advice, but to have two men ask and both in one morning--well, no wonder even Uncle Ebenezer was moved to make comments.

"And," added Uncle Ebenezer, "don't forget that man who sent you the verse about Methuselah last week and who said he approved of your ideas."

All in all, I told Uncle Ebenezer, I'd have to watch my step or I might become uppity and start giving advice to him and Uncle Silas. There certainly is a lot of advice I'd like to offer mankind occasionally. But I haven't lived for -- Oh, well, let's say these several years -- without learning never to give advice to men except upon request -- and often not then.

The first request today came from a young man who actually made me a visit to ask it. He was in a quandry that kept him from sleeping at night and from enjoying regular meals. A young friend of his, aged exactly six months, had been named after him. And he wanted to buy this namesake a present or two, just by way of celebrating the occasion. Not a big present, you understand. That could wait until Christmas. But a small gift or two, something that was suitable for the age of his small friend.

"Your see," the young man told me. "This is the first baby that I have ever had the pleasure of knowing well at all and therefore I really am unable to decide what he himself would consider appropriate."

Quite natural. As Uncle Ebenezer says, you have to be fairly intimate with several babies, or have one of your own, or take a course in the psychology of infancy, if you are going to solve a problem like that for yourself.

Uncle Ebenezer asked the young man to sit down and have a cigar, just by way of calming his nerves, and I telephoned to Mrs. Rowena Schmidt Carpenter at the Bureau of Home Economics. If anybody would be able to aid the young man she would, I knew, for she is a specialist in child guidance and she has also gained some practical experience from her own young son.

Toys for babies she said, should be safe, simple, sanitary and light-weight.

"Safe, simple, sanitary and light-weight," I told the young man, who put it down in his notebook.

Toys should be comfortable for the baby to handle, smooth, not too heavy, unbreakable, and made without points that will scratch or dangerous paint or glue that will come off. Some toys are painted with non-poisonous paint. Rubber, wood and celluloid are generally good choices in materials since they are light-weight and easy to keep clean. Wooly toys are not sanitary. Neither are dolls with hair and eyes that may come out. Metal toys are usually too heavy for the baby to handle and may do damage if he throws them around. Babies learn early the art of dropping things. Next they learn to throw them, and the chances are that they will try these activities with all their playthings. China and porcelain playthings are dangerous because they may break and cause dangerous cuts or bruises.

However, Mrs. Carpenter suggested three gifts that ought to be just the thing for any child of this age. First, a good-sized, colored, rubber ball. This fills the requirements. It is sanitary because it can be washed and it is simple, safe and light in weight. More than that, its color makes it gay and interesting to a very young person just learning about shapes and colors and the feeling of things in this strange new world.

A second gift suggested was a good-old-fashioned rubber doll--soft, washable, unbreakable, with a lively squeak in the center.

The third was a little toy man made with a light celluloid body and small wooden bead arms and legs. This doll is attached to a long tape at the other end of which is a clamp to fasten it to the baby-carriage, or the play-pen so that there will be no danger of losing it.

I think the young man went away pleased and satisfied. I have his word for it, anyway.

No sooner was this settled than along came a letter from a father of seven asking for information on simple, home-made furnishings for the back-yard playground. Not very long ago we had quite a chat on this very subject, but probably the father of seven was at the office and couldn't listen in. So I'll just say again that there is a nice little leaflet, called "Backyard Playgrounds", issued by the Chidren's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Labor, which tells about various pieces of play equipment which the home carpenter can build. There are a lot of nice little sketches showing just how to con-

struct swings and teeters and so on. And the leaflet is free.

Some large packing boxes, several planks of various sizes, a ladder or two, a log and a sandbox make ideal yard equipment for the pre-school child, according to child guidance specialists. Packing boxes can be made safe for use by nailing down their covers and painting them with waterproof paint. If boxes, planks, ladders and sandbox are all painted the same color, they will not seem unsightly in the yard. These materials stimulate greater activity --I am using these big words because I am quoting the experts--These materials stimulate greater activity by making it necessary for the child to arrange and rearrange them himself. There is unlimited opportunity for climbing, pushing, pulling, stretching, building, sliding, jumping, and all the valuable physical activities which aid in the building of the normal, healthy body.

A box of clean, white sand continues to attract the child long after his nursery days. So does brown sand, if you can't get white. By providing the sandbox with a cover it may be kept clean and dry most of the time. Another piece of equipment which the child will not soon outgrow is a swing. His father can make a satisfactory teeter in his spare moments, and this too can usually be altered as the child grows larger and more daring.

Now let's turn our thoughts from playthings to lamb stew. The menu today features lamb stew for the children. Lamb stew containing plenty of celery, carrots, onions and turnips. Then Potatoes on the Half-Shell; Prune Salad with Cooked Salad Dressing; Baked Custard and red jelly to garnish it.

The recipe for the stew is planned for a family of five, just as most of the recipes I give you are. But it contains nine ingredients:

2 pounds of lean raw lamb
2 tablespoons of butter or other fat
1/2 cup of sliced onion
2 cups of diced turnips
1 cup of diced celery
2 cups of diced carrots
1 quart of water
Flour, and
Salt.

That makes nine. I'll read them again. (Repeat)

When you go to the market to buy the lamb for the stew, you can buy breast shoulder, neck, flank or trimmings. And ask the butcher to cut it up in pieces for stewing, unless you prefer to cut it up yourself.

Wipe the meat with a damp cloth, and roll the pieces in flour. Melt the fat in a skillet. Add the onions and cook for a few minutes. Now add the meat. When the meat and onion have browned delicately, transfer them to a kettle. Pour the water into the skillet to take up what is left of the browned fat. Then add the water to the meat in the kettle. Cover the kettle, and simmer for one hour or until the meat is nearly tender. Then add the turnips, celery, carrots and salt and cook for 20 minutes longer. If the stew is not thick enough, add one tablespoon of flour mixed with two tablespoons of cold water, and cook for several minutes longer, stirring constantly.

Tomorrow: "The Expert Jelly-Maker." Some pointers for making fruit jelly.